

benefits, such as proper indexing, as a result of the deal or will it just be the tipped off new stock purchasers who will benefit?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I find the question very strange, and the lack of background knowledge on the part of the questioner even stranger. I am sure the hon. member is fully aware that I am not the minister to whom Canadian National reports and I am in no position to know what are the plans of Canadian National. I think the hon. member is merely rumour-mongering, and he should realize that by posing a question to a minister on a matter for which that minister is not responsible, and on which the hon. member is not well informed, he is spreading the rumour further.

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[Translation]

SUPPLY AND SERVICES

INQUIRY WHETHER FIRE ENGINE CONTRACT HAS BEEN AWARDED TO WALTER TRUCK CANADA

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton-Strathcona): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Supply and Services. I believe he is fully aware of the details concerning the disgusting case of the Walter Truck Canada Company. Can the minister tell the House why he has awarded a \$6 million fire trucks contract to that company, which would seem to have been reincorporated for that occasion and which is a technical branch of a bankrupt American company, strictly on the basis of plans? In addition, could he explain why, after several months of procrastination, he turned down the lowest bidder who would have guaranteed the experience, the skills and the 70 per cent plus Canadian content of the well known Thibault fire trucks?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, we did wait several months because the bids filed were very thoroughly examined. We received a request from the Department of National Defence concerning certain technical requirements. The Walter Truck Company which was chosen did best meet those technical requirements and therefore it was awarded the contract.

Mr. Kilgour: Madam Speaker, that is one more example of the just society of the Liberals who, in my opinion, lead the most corrupt government in our history. How can anyone award such a big contract to a company whose headquarters and sole small shop are located in the riding of the Minister of National Health and Welfare? Are contracts always awarded with consideration for the political stripe of the bidders, keeping in mind that the owners, Messrs. Marcoux and Laporte, are very well known Liberals?

Mr. Blais: Madam Speaker, first I might point out to the hon. member that he is questioning not only the integrity of

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the officials of my department but also that of the officials of the Department of National Defence. If he wants to make those kinds of accusations I hope he has supporting evidence to back them up. Madam Speaker, I do not believe that the officials who discharge their duties day in and day out ought to be subjected to such meaningless charges. I can tell the hon. member that he is raising issues about which he does not know anything at all, that the contract was awarded to the Walter Truck Canada Company because it did guarantee more Canadian content than the lowest bid which was rejected. Everything was done in an orderly manner. I made sure of that. If the hon. member wants to make an accusation let him do so seriously and let him stop making unfounded charges.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE

TERMINATION OF SERVICES OF COMBINES DIRECTOR OF INVESTIGATION AND RESEARCH

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Madam Speaker, my question today is for the Prime Minister. Over the last two days there have been many statements surrounding the termination of the services of Monsieur Robert Bertrand, director of investigation and research. Because they are coming from government officials I think it is extremely important that this be clarified. Health reasons are being given, as well as the suggestion of a promotion to the Anti-dumping Tribunal. Senior officials are saying he was fired. In one case he was falsely accused of leaking information. Since it is the cabinet which is responsible for his appointment, I urge the Prime Minister to make a statement to this House to clarify the reasons why the services of Monsieur Bertrand were terminated.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I would gladly say a few words about this because I believe many of the adverse rumours we have heard in the past few days have been unjustified and, in some cases, malicious.

I have known Mr. Bertrand for some 20 years. I have a very high regard for his human and professional qualities. He is the best man to state on his behalf whether he was fired or whether he is going to another job which is of his choosing. I expect him in the next day or so to make a statement to that effect. Indeed, I encourage him to do so.

REASONS FOR CHANGE IN POSITIONS

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Madam Speaker, I have just a brief supplementary question. The timing of this termination could not be more unfortunate, and I ask the Prime Minister to confirm that there was a great policy difference between the incumbent director of investigation and research and the cabinet minister involved, that Mr. Bertrand's services were terminated, that the cabinet was asked to approve that, that it refused to do so and that Mr. Bertrand,